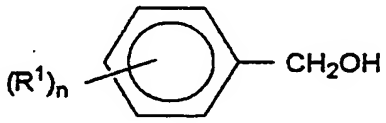
Claims

1. Process for the preparation of an ω-benzyl ester of an amino dicarboxylic acid, characterized in that the amino dicarboxylic acid is reacted with a benzyl alcohol derivative of formula (I)



in which the R^1 substituent or substituents, which are identical or different, represent a hydrogen atom, a C_1 to C_4 alkyl group, a C_1 to C_4 alkoxy group or a halogen atom and n is equal to 1, 2 or 3,
in the presence of at least one mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid of an alkanesulphonic acid, optionally in the presence of a solvent.

2. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that the amino diacid is an α-amino carboxylic acid carrying another carboxyl group attached to a carbon other than that in the α position.

3. Process according to Claim 2, characterized in that the amino diacid is glutamic acid or aspartic acid.

4. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the alcohol of formula (I) is benzyl alcohol.

5. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the temperature of the reaction is less than or equal to 80°C.

6. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the benzyl alcohol or its derivative of formula (I) is used in an amount chosen

within the range from 1.2 to 3 mol per mole of the amino diacid.

7. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the alkanesulphonic acid is methanesulphonic acid.

8. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the amount of alkanesulphonic acid used is chosen within the range from 1.01 to 2 mol per mole of the amino diacid.

9. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the solvent of the reaction is chosen from aliphatic or aromatic and halogenated or nonhalogenated hydrocarbons.

10. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the ω-benzyl ester of the amino diacid is obtained in the free form by bringing the alkanesulphonate of the ω-benzyl ester of the amino diacid obtained into contact with an organic or inorganic base.

11. Process according to Claim 10, characterized in that the base is used in an amount sufficient to reach the isoelectric point of the ester to be obtained.

12. Process according to Claim 10 or 11, characterized in that the base is an aqueous ammonia solution.

13. Process according to one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the alkanesulphonate of the ω-benzyl ester of the amino diacid is crystallized before being converted to the free ω-benzyl ester of the amino diacid.

14. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the solvent/water

azeotrope is distilled off at a temperature of less than 80°C.

15. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the alkanesulphonate of the ω-benzyl ester of the amino diacid is isolated before being brought into contact with the base.

16. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 14, characterized in that the alkanesulphonate of the ω-benzyl ester of the amino diacid is not isolated from the medium before this ester is released.

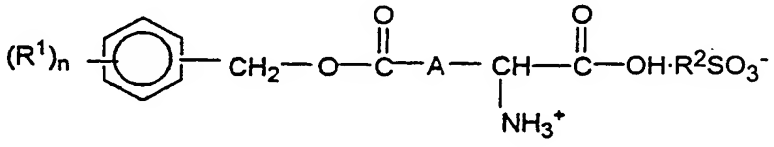
17. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the alkanesulphonate of the ω-benzyl ester to be converted to the free ester is dissolved with water.

18. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a solvent for the benzyl alcohol derivative is added to the medium comprising the ester to be released.

19. Process according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that, after having reached the pH of the isoelectric point, the medium is heated.

20. Alkanesulphonate of ω-benzyl ester of amino dicarboxylic acid.

21. Alkanesulphonate according to Claim 20, characterized in that it is represented by the following formula (II):



in which the R^1 substituent or substituents, which are identical or different, represent a hydrogen atom, a C_1 to C_4 alkyl group, a C_1 to C_4 alkoxy group or a halogen atom and n is equal to 1, 2 or 3, A is the part of the molecule of an α-amino carboxylic acid attached to the carbon in the α position and to the carboxyl group in the ω position, and R^2 represents the alkane residue of the alkanesulphonic acid.

22. Alkanesulphonate according to the preceding claim, characterized in that it is γ-benzyl glutamate methanesulphonate or β-benzyl aspartate methanesulphonate.